

Daily Assignment

Sunday, December 19, 2010

Daily Assignment #31: Energizers

Energizers are get up and move activities that can take 60 seconds, or longer, to do. They are a quick way of getting the blood from the butt back up to the brain.

Energizers can also be a community building activity. Students need them, particularly if they have been sitting through a sit-and-get instructional period. It doesn't matter the age group, we all need a stand and stretch moment. Think about it. Have you ever been in a class where you have been unable to maintain your attention on the instructor because you just need to move around? As gifted and exciting as we are as teachers, believe me, your students have tuned you out as well during instruction. So, get them up and moving. You'll get more out of them when they return to their seats.

Here are a few examples of quick energizers:

1. "My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean": Everyone begins by being seated. Then begin singing the song. Everytime a "b" word is said either stand or sit. So, for the first "b" word, (Bonnie), everyone stands. Then for the second "b" word, again Bonnie, everyone sits. Continue with this pattern. If it has been done correctly, everyone will end up seated.
2. Simon Says: I know you all know this one. However, let me offer this simpler version--only do head, shoulder, waist, and knees. Also, no one is ever out. Just smile and keep going. This way keeps everyone engaged and no one is sitting out, and possibly being disruptive.
3. Simply stand and stretch.
4. Zip, Zap, Zop: Stand in a circle. One person has a nerf ball or beach ball. They make eye contact with someone across the circle and says "Zip" and throws the ball at that person. That person makes eye contact with someone else across the circle, says "Zap" and throws the ball at that person. Then that person makes eye contact across the circle, says "Zop" and throws the ball at that person. Then it all begins again. The pace can be quite fast. They cannot throw it at a person beside them. They have to throw the ball across the circle.
5. Catch Me If You Can: Players should be paired up. All players divide into two lines (facing in) shoulder to shoulder, with partners facing each other. Participants should be given approximately 30 seconds to look at their partners, taking in all details about the individual. The leader then instructs the two lines to turn and face away from the center. One or both lines has 15-20 seconds to change something about their

Multiple Intelligences

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appearance (i.e. change a watch to different wrist, unbutton a button, remove a belt, etc.). The change must be discrete, but visible to the partner. The players again turn in to face each other and have 30 seconds to discover the physical changes that have been made. Players get to interact with each other and have fun!

6. Sing "Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes" with actions.

7. Left-Right Alphabet: Write the alphabet on large chart paper. Underneath each letter of the alphabet, put an L or R.

A B C D E F G H ...

L L R L R R R L...

Do a random sequence of L's and R's. Students stand and sing the alphabet and, as they do so, they raise either the left arm or right arm depending on the letter. This is great fun, as well as challenging.

8. Think-Pair-Share: When sharing students must stand, make eye contact with someone across the room, walk to them, then share.

I hope you will experiment with at least one energizer. If you have one that you really like, please share it with all of us.

Please share this blogsite with colleagues and friends. If you haven't already, consider becoming a "Follower".

This will be my last blog until January 2nd.

I wish you all a healthy, safe and relaxing December break.

Best Effort,

Linda103

Posted by **linda103** at 4:52 PM No comments: 

Cooperative Learning

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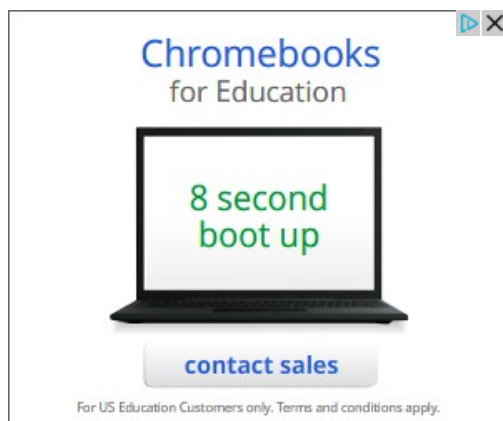
About Me

linda103

Educator for 34 years. Classroom teacher- grades 1,2,3,5,6.

Educational consultant for 18 years teaching a graduate level course on effective teaching strategies.

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Wednesday, December 15, 2010

Daily Assignment #30: Interruptions During Instruction

We all have them, Interruptions During Instruction, unwelcome intrusions, e.g. intercom announcements, custodian collecting trash, a student entering the classroom late, parents who drop by, colleagues who want to borrow something, and the list goes on. A day can seem like a series of interruptions with some instruction happening in between.

So, how do we handle these interruptions? Some teachers allow them and then just continue instruction where they left off before the interruption. Other teachers do not allow them. They might turn off the intercom speaker or put the trash barrels outside the classroom door so the custodian doesn't come into the class or put a do not disturb sign on the door. I've known upper grade teachers who have locked their classroom door so that students who are late do not come in and interrupt instruction. And then there are teachers who totally ignore the intrusion and press on.

I think most teachers match their response to the intrusion. A response to a student interruption may be very different than a response to a colleague interrupting instruction. The response might also depend on the type of interruption, e.g. the teacher is teaching a concept to a small group of students and a student, from another group, comes over to ask a question versus the teacher is teaching a concept to a small group of students and a student shouts out a question from across the room.

Whatever the response to the interruption, it sends a message to your students as to what is important to you.

I hope this has given you something to reflect on.

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Best Effort,
Linda103

Posted by **linda103** at 7:09 PM No comments:

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Sunday, December 12, 2010

Dailyl Assignment #29: "I" Message

The "I" Message is an effective management strategy. Thomas Gordon coined the phrase, "I" Message, in 1960. It consist of 3 parts:

1. a non-blameful description: When you interrupt my teaching,
2. the effect of the behavior on you: I feel frustrated.
3. what you would like to happen next: I would like you to raise your hand if you want to speak.

Using this language takes the "you" out of the message and makes it nonjudgemental. You are stating facts.

Examples:

1. Jack leaves the lab table and leaves the materials out.

Jack, when you leave the materials out,

I feel afraid that the materials will be broken.

Please put the materials away.

2. Maria finishes eating her snack and leaves, leaving behind her trash.

Maria, when you leave trash on the table,

I feel frustrated because I have to clean it up.

Please put your trash in the wastebasket after eating.

These 3 key phrases can act as a guide :

1. When you...
2. I feel...
3. I would like...

I hope you will take the opportunity to experiment with this strategy. Let me know how it goes.

I hope you will share this blogsite with colleagues and friends.
Also, if you haven't yet, consider becoming a "Follower".

Best Effort,
Linda103

Posted by [linda103](#) at 6:20 PM No comments: 

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Wednesday, December 8, 2010

Daily Assignment #28: Rock/Paper/Scissors

I'm sure you remember this game from childhood. Did you know that children in Japan are taught this game to solve some problems, such as who gets the ball first?

After witnessing the effectiveness of this strategy myself, I decided to implement it in my classroom. I must say, it eliminated me having to deal with a lot of little things that might have otherwise taking up valuable teaching time.

Students used Rock/Paper/ Scissors to solve ---- who got the coveted seat, who were the captains for games at recess, who passed out papers, who used certain art supplies first, and the list goes on. It was wonderful to see the students take total responsibility in solving problems that had the potential to become a major distraction from learning.

If you decide to experiment with this strategy make sure you:

1. name it
2. state what it is for
3. describe how to do it
4. model
5. have students practice
6. give feedback
7. practice more

Tidbit: I had the students stand back to back. Some students would hesitate just long enough to see what the other student was going to do.

Please share this blogsite with colleagues and friends. If you haven't already, I hope you will consider becoming a "Follower".

Best Effort,
Linda103

Posted by [linda103](#) at 7:18 PM No comments: 

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Sunday, December 5, 2010

Daily Assignment #27: Holidays

For the month of December 2011 here is a list of some of the religious/ethnic holidays:

- Dec. 5 Ashura, Islamic/Muslim
- 6 St. Nicholas Day, International
- 8 Bodhi Day, Buddhist
- 12 Virgin of Guadalupe, Mexico
- 13 Santa Lucia Day, Sweden
- 16-25 Las Posadas, Mexico
- 21-28 Hanukkah, Jewish

25 Christmas, Christians, Roman Catholics, International

26-Jan. 1 Kwanzaa, African Americans

What should happen in the classroom during this holiday season?

Some teachers select several different holidays to teach about religious/ethnic traditions. Other teachers just share holiday traditions for one or two religions/ethnic groups. Another approach would be to ask for parent volunteers to teach their religious/ethnic holiday traditions. An another approach might be to do nothing at all.

I've done it all. For me, I found the best approach was to ask for parent volunteers to come in and do a 30-40 minute presentation. If I didn't know the parent well, I would ask them to share with me their lesson plan in advance. In this way, I could help them with appropriateness for the age group and timing. The parents were always well prepared. It would be an amazing lesson and better than what I would have done.

There would be years when only one parent would come in and I would need to teach 1-2 more holidays. Then other years there might be 3 different parents who would come in to share 3 different holidays. If no one volunteered then I would teach Hanukkah, Christmas and Kwanzaa, or a holiday that reflected the population in my class.

I hope you will share this blogsite with colleagues and friends. If you haven't already, consider becoming a "Follower".

Best Effort,
Linda103

Posted by [linda103](#) at 6:33 PM No comments: 

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Wednesday, December 1, 2010

Daily Assignment #26: Cooperative Learning

Cooperative Learning is a phrase that is used a lot but is frequently confused with "Group Work". Cooperative Learning is different from Group Work. Group work is random grouping of students working on an assignment or task together.

Cooperative Learning begins with the teacher purposefully selecting students, with various abilities, to work together as a team on a project or assignment. Each team member is responsible, not only for their learning, but for each team members learning and completion of the task. Everyone succeeds when the group succeeds.

There is a cooperative learning structure called "Jigsaw". Students are part of a home team, which consist of 4-5 teacher selected students. The members of the home team break into expert groups, which are made up of other students from home teams. Each expert group learns a specific assignment and then returns to their home team to teach that information. Everyone in the home teams must sign off that they know, and could represent, the home team on any of the information.

Example:

Social Justice Legends

1. Class is divided into 5 groups of 4 by the teacher. These 5 groups are the Home Teams.
2. In each Home Team, have the students letter off---A, B, C, D.
3. As teams, all the A's are to study Martin Luther King Jr. All the B's will study Eleanor Roosevelt. The C's will study Mahatma Gandhi and the D's will study former president Jimmy Carter. These are the expert teams. Together they go over the information on the legend and decide how they will present it to their Home Teams.
4. After a period of time, 20-30 mins., depending on the groups and information, students return to their Home Teams to teach their legend.
5. Once each expert has completed teaching, they must be sure everyone in the Home Team understands and knows the information. Encourage Home Team members to ask clarifying questions.
6. The Home Teams number off--- Home Team 1, Home Team 2, Home Team 3, Home Team 4, Home Team 5.
7. The teacher checks for understanding. The teacher draws a name of one of the legends from a hat and then a letter, A,B,C,D, and then a Home Team number. The person with the matching letter from the Home Team drawn, must give the data on the legend the teacher drew. I hope this makes sense.

There are so many benefits from doing Cooperative Learning--students working together, everyone must participate, students as teachers, efficient way to teach, students must listen and respect each other in order for learning to occur, new and interesting way to present new content, the teacher is not the teacher, to mention a few.

Here is a great link if you want more information:

<http://www.jigsaw.org/overview.htm>

I hope you experiment with this strategy. I've used it many times and it is amazing how productive the students are and invested in their learning.

Please share this blogsite with colleagues and friends and, if you haven't already, become a "Follower".

If you are following this site through Facebook, please know, I will not be advertising on Facebook the month of December. However, I will continue to post my blog. So, you might want to bookmark this link.

Thanks so much for your support.

Linda103

Posted by **linda103** at 6:24 PM No comments: 

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Sunday, November 28, 2010

Daily Assignment #25: Rubrics

Heidi Goodrich, author of Understanding Rubrics, defines a rubric as "a scoring tool that lists the criteria for a piece of work, simply put, rubrics 'list what counts,' " based on a gradation of 1-4. Also, teachers should include exemplars for students to have a visual of what the gradations look like. I found this link, www.teach-nology.com, which offers several different types of rubrics.

Rubrics help students to evaluate and revise their own work. They empower students. Rubrics will also eliminate students playing "Guess What's on the Teacher's Mind." A favorite game of many teachers. No longer will you hear, "I didn't know what you wanted." Or that all time favorite, "You gave me that grade because you don't like me."

The unfortunate part about a rubric is, as the designer of the tool, (meaning any teacher who uses them), it can be time consuming in designing just one. So, I would like to suggest, design rubrics for authentic assessments and use "Criteria for Success" for all other assignments.

Criteria for Success would be number 3 on a rubric. Bottomline, for #3, the teacher will not accept anything less on an assignment but will certainly accept more. As someone who has used this strategy, particularly for writing assignments, the quality of work is amazing. Student performance was much better. In fact, by spring, the students would establish the criteria with me. In this way, everyone was invested in the assignment.

Also, using rubrics and criteria for success helps tremendously with conversations with parents. Grading/scoring is objective. It is based on a student's efforts on their performance. No confusion there.

I hope you will experiment with rubrics and criteria for success. Student performance will surprise you.

On another note, if you are following this blogsite link from Facebook, I will not be advertising for the month of December. However, I will continue to post blogs. So, please bookmark this blogsite for future viewing. Thanks so much.

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Best Effort,
Linda103

Posted by [linda103](#) at 4:06 PM 3 comments: 

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Wednesday, November 24, 2010

Daily Assignment #24: Multiple Intelligences

We're all familiar with Howard Gardner's work on multiple intelligences. Gardner

has identified 8 intelligence, which are listed below:

- Spatial
- Linguistic
- Logical-mathematical
- Bodily-kinesthetic
- Musical
- Interpersonal
- Intrapersonal
- Naturalistic

So, what does this mean for a classroom teacher? [\[edit\]](#)

Well, it means that as we plan our lessons we need to think about these intelligences and how we might incorporate them into our lesson.

For example:

Spatial--use graphics, drawings, maps, pictures, visualizations, videos, art, graphic organizers, illustrations, smartboards

Linguistic--speaking, dialogues, debates, plays, narratives

Logical/Mathematical--reasoning, deductive & inductive logic, facts, data, organizing, analyzing, assessments, outlines, timelines, analogies, patterns, problemsolving, formulas

Bodily/Kinesthetic--art, activity, action, hands on experiments, drama, sports, manipulatives, touch, field trips, role playing, learning centers, labs, games, cooperative learning activities

Musical--music, rhythm, pacing, chorus, jingles, background music, songs

Interpersonal--interactions, share, talk, socialize, clubs, working in pairs, group work, think-pair-share

Intrapersonal--solitude, think time, reflection, journal, self-assess, set goals, write, introspection, independent assignments

Naturalist--exploring nature, outdoor education, observation, identification, classifying, categorizing, living things, field trips, ecology studies

As you plan a lesson for next week, try to include, within that lesson, at least 2 strategies to address 2 different multiple intelligences.

When planning a unit of study, include as many of the intelligences as possible. You and the students will meet with more success.

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**Best Effort,
Linda103**

Posted by **linda103** at 2:35 PM No comments: 

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Sunday, November 21, 2010

Daily Assignment #23: Chunking Instruction Within a Lesson

Chunking Instruction is when a teacher varies the activities within a lesson to keep a quick pace and to address different learning styles.

The lesson structure might look like this:

1. Teacher does direct instruction: teacher explains how the Greeks explained things in nature and gives an example.
2. Small group interaction: groups of 3 students spend about 5 minutes thinking about other myths that explain elements in nature.
3. Whole group sharing: groups report out on their thinking.
4. Small groups apply skills/knowledge: the small groups now write their own original myth explaining an element of nature.
5. Whole group sharing: groups share their stories
6. Teacher does direct instruction: explains characteristics of several Greek Heroes.
7. Small group interaction: groups select a hero and, using a descriptive graphic organizer, list the characteristics.
8. Whole group sharing: groups share their graphic organizers
9. Individual students apply knowledge/skills independently: each student must create a myth, which explains an element of nature and include at least 1 Greek Hero.

By doing a lesson, in this way, you are addressing the introverted and extroverted learners in your class, among other learning styles. The pace is quick, which helps with attention. The students have an opportunity to take in learning, discuss it and apply it many times in different ways. Because students have had opportunities to practice, within small groups before they work independently, the success of the

writing assignment will be greater.

I hope this helps with lesson planning. It will make a difference in students' learning.

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Best Effort,
Linda103

Posted by **linda103** at 5:56 PM No comments: 

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Wednesday, November 17, 2010

Daily Assignment #22: Downtime-Be Prepared

We all have those moments when something happens unexpectedly and downtime occurs, students have nothing to do. It can be very scary, especially if you haven't developed a repertoire of strategies to fill those moments.

Let me give you some examples of what I mean: the music teacher is behind schedule and your class is waiting in the hallway, or the school nurse is checking all the students' hearing and vision, you can't teach a lesson because half the class is at the nurse's office and the other half is with you, or it is photo day, the class is lined up waiting for their turn, which feels like forever, or some students have finished their work and others are still working, or it's dismissal time and buses are late, and the list goes on. Sound familiar? What is amazing is that these can all happen within one day.

So, what should you do? Keep on hand ideas to fill these moments.

Examples: Fast Math, Simon Says, Hangman, Math Facts, name states, capitals, countries, rivers, baseball/football teams, famous pairs, e.g. Bert and Ernie, Otis and Milo, Anthony and Cleopatra, Adam and Eve, songs, e.g. Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes, skip counting, telephone, spelling challenge. Notice some of these are content related, others are fun and just to get through the moment.

Take a moment and collect a few ideas to build your repertoire. Check in with colleagues, find out what they are doing, exchange ideas.

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Thanks and Best Effort,
Linda103

Posted by **linda103** at 6:36 PM 2 comments: 

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Sunday, November 14, 2010

Daily Assignment #21: Planning for a Substitute, Plan B

It is inevitable, if it hasn't happened yet, you will be absent. Do not stress over it.

The students will be fine if you are out for a few days. It is much better for everyone if you stay home and take care of yourself than push yourself and, in the process, contaminate everyone.

Now, having said that, please know that I went to work many times feeling dreadful, and I am sure, with a fever. I went for many reasons: I thought the children would fall apart without me; I knew the room would fall apart without me; I didn't have plans for the next day. The fact is, when I was absent, unexpectedly, everything was alright, albeit the children were glad when I returned.

Here is a strategy I adapted, which was very helpful. I call it Plan B, because Plan A are those wonderful plans we do everyday that anyone could teach.

Plan B:

For each day of the week, have a 2-pocket folder. On one side put a typical daily schedule. On the other side have possible generic lessons, worksheets, and activities. For example: Literacy-- a short story with comprehension and recall questions, or a writing activity where students read 3/4 of the story and write a new ending.

Math--worksheets that review previously taught concepts, or activities/games students can do with partners or in teams.

Science--students choose an animal, from a list you have created, they are to draw a sketch and using a descriptive graphic organizer, list characteristics selected from books, articles, and other resources, which have been set aside for this purpose.

Social Studies--with partners list as many countries, or states, or continents, (challenge-list capitals).

Also, in the folder, put the names 2-3 students who would make good helpers for the sub.

By doing this now, in the unfortunate circumstance that you need to be absent, you can focus on getting better and not what is happening in your classroom and the substitute will thank you for being so well planned.

If you have any ideas for topics I welcome your suggestions.

Please share this blogsite with colleagues and friends. Consider becoming a "Follower", if you haven't already.

Best Effort,
Linda103

Posted by [linda103](#) at 5:31 PM No comments: 

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Wednesday, November 10, 2010

Daily Assignment #20: Eyes in the back of our heads

We are amazing people. We notice things going on all over our classroom. When working with a small group, we know what Johnny is doing over by the door and what Sasha and Claudie are doing at their seats. We can tell Julia to get back on task by using a signal and give permission to Tim to go to the bathroom. Amazing!

All of these are management strategies called "Overlapping". It is a term created by Jacob Kounin, a classroom behavioral theorist. In Kounin's book, *Discipline and Group Management in Classrooms*, he states "overlapping is the ability to attend to two issues at the same time."

I believe we actually attend to many more than 2 issues at a time. We are masters at doing this.

So, the next time you notice a child off task and say something to them and then turn and finish a lesson with a group, say "Aha, I just did "Overlapping".

Please share this blogsite with colleagues and friends.
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Thank you.
Best Effort,
Linda103

Posted by [linda103](#) at 7:57 PM No comments: 

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Sunday, November 7, 2010

Daily Assignment #19: Teaching Graphic Organizers

Teachers have a tendency to give students graphic organizers and assume that students know how to use them. Each type of graphic organizer needs to have a specific lesson, which explains the purpose and use.

In the first lesson the graphic organizer is chosen by the teacher and needs to be modeled by the teacher, with students filling in the pertinent data with the teacher. The next time, the graphic organizer is used, the teacher fills in the main topics and information with the students. The next time, the students fill in the main topics and with the teacher they fill in the information. The next time, the students fill in the main topics and the information independently. By letting students take responsibility for the graphic organizer in steps, ensures more success when they are required to complete one independently.

Notice I keep saying "the next time." That's because one step may require the teacher to model it many times before students are able to do the work independently.

Use the same graphic organizer many times and in different content areas.

Thinking skills and graphic organizers, as a rule, are not content specific. Students need to recognize this, as well.

Also, when introducing a graphic organizer, I recommend, using familiar content so that the focus is on the how to use the graphic organizer, not new content.

Thank you for your support and please continue to share this blog with colleagues and friends.

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Best Effort,

Linda103

Posted by [linda103](#) at 3:40 PM No comments: 

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Wednesday, November 3, 2010

Daily Assignment #18: Graphic Organizers

Graphic organizers are visual tools for thinking skills. There are many different kinds, depending on the Thinking Skill. I would like to share 3 of my favorite.

As I mentioned in Daily Assignment #17, the Descriptive Graphic Organizer is for identifying characteristics. This is a commonly used one. Another name for this graphic organizer is the Web or Wheel. When using the Descriptive Graphic Organizer, not only have the students put a characteristic on the lines coming out from the center circle, but at the end of the line draw a box and have them put evidence to support the characteristic. For example: a characteristic of the big bad wolf in The Three Little Pigs is that he is persistent. The evidence is that he continued to chase the little pigs after failing several times.

Students have a great deal of difficulty summarizing. They have a tendency to copy the book or information. The Sequential Graphic Organizer is a great visual tool for summarizing an article, book, event or steps in a directions. It is a series of connecting linear boxes. For example, K-1 students may just have 3 boxes.

Second graders may have 5 boxes. Older students can make decisions on how many boxes they would need, keeping in mind that a summary is an abbreviated version of the original information.

The third graphic organizer is the Compare and Contrast, a.k.a. Venn Diagram. I prefer the Double Bubble design to the Venn Diagram. I can never fit in all the information in the center shape. The Double Bubble has 2 circles with lines coming out on one side of each circle, connecting to boxes. Between the 2 circles, in the center of the paper, there is another column of boxes, with connecting lines to both circles. The 2 things being compared would be in the circles. The things that are different would be in the outside boxes and what is similar/same would be in the center boxes. (I hope this is not as confusing as I think it is.)

I went on line to see if I could find a model of what I described. I found several that

are very similar. If you search Double Bubble graphic organizers several versions come up, which may help.

On Sunday, I will describe teaching students how to use graphic organizers.

In the meantime, thank you so much for your support. Please continue to share this site with colleagues and friends. If you haven't already, consider becoming a "Follower."

Best Effort,
Linda103

Posted by **linda103** at 8:18 PM No comments: 

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Sunday, October 31, 2010

Daily Assignment #17: Thinking Skills, what are they?

We hear so much about teaching "Thinking Skills." I'm sure everyone has heard of Bloom's Taxonomy of Thinking Skills: <http://eduscapes.com/tap/topic69.htm>. There is also Deborah Burn's Taxonomy of Thinking Skills: <http://www.gifted.uconn.edu/sem/typeiips.html>

Bottomline, this is my definition, "Thinking Skills" are the higher level learning objectives that teachers' design for students within a lesson. Wow, that was a mouthful.

Let me give you some examples of what this means:

Objective for a literature lesson: Students will know and be able to identify 5 characteristics of the main character in the novel To Kill A Mockingbird, by completing a Descriptive Graphic Organizer.

*the "Thinking Skill" is an Analytical Reasoning Skill: Identifying Characteristics (Bloom's). The graphic organizer provides a visual tool for the student.

(I will do more on graphic organizers on Wednesday).

Objective for a math lesson: Students will know and be able to categorize a group of 10 objects according to attributes.

* the "Thinking Skill" is, again, an Analytical Reasoning Skill: Categorizing (Bloom's).

Objective for a social studies lesson: Students will know and be able to brainstorm 8 possible reasons people have migrated to the U.S.A.

*the "Thinking Skill is a Creativity Skill: Brainstorming and a Critical Thinking Skill: Deductive Thinking.

Most lessons have thinking skills embedded within them. Being cognizant of the

importance of "Thinking Skills" during planning is essential. You might want to take the opportunity to reflect on previously taught lessons and highlight the "Thinking Skills."

If you discover that your lessons do not include a "Thinking Skill," it is time to deliberately include them and teach them within your lesson designs. Take a look at the links, included in the first paragraph, to help your thinking.

Please share this blogsite with colleagues and friends. If you haven't already, become a "Follower."

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Thanks and Best Effort,
Linda103

Posted by **linda103** at **4:13 PM** **No comments:** 

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Wednesday, October 27, 2010

Daily Assignment #16: Forming Groups

It can be a challenge to form groups quickly for various activities. If students are asked to do it on their own they have a tendency to select their friends, of course. Also, there are children who are never picked, for various reasons.

If the teacher selects the groups, the students will blame the teacher if they are in a group they are not happy with. Using the strategies listed below will help to eliminate the blame problem because it is luck of the draw, it has nothing to do with the teacher.

Strategies for forming random groups quickly:

*Numbered Heads--students count off 1-5. All the ones together, all the twos and so on. Or 1,2,3,4,5 makes a group and so on.

*Using a deck of cards have all the aces form a group, kings, queens, jacks or use the numbered cards.

*Use different colored pieces of paper. All the red pieces form a group, greens another, blues, yellows, etc...

*Plastic animals. There are so many different types you can purchase. Lions form a group, elephants another group, etc...

*Different colored counting bears, unifix cubes, pattern blocks, M&M's (a favorite), all these and many others lend themselves to forming groups.

For pairing students up quickly, these strategies work as well. Using "Old Maid" cards works also. Try to find an "Old Bachelor" deck of cards.

All of these work for K-12. High School students get a kick out of getting plastic animals, counting bears, etc..., as much as the younger students do.

I hope you will experiment with these strategies. Let me know how they work for you and your students.

Please share this blogsite with colleagues and friends and if you haven't already, become a "Follower".

Thank you.

Best Effort,
Linda103

Posted by **linda103** at 7:36 PM No comments: 

[Recommend this on Google](#)

Sunday, October 24, 2010

Daily Assignment #15: Getting Students' Attention and Keeping it

We all have so many strategies for getting students' attention and keeping it. It would be great if you could sit with your colleagues and list the many strategies used. Most teachers are not even cognizant of how many strategies they use within a 30 minute block of time.

Here is a list of some attention strategies that I have used and some I know other teachers have used:

Clapping patterns

Switching lights on and off

Hands on head

Stop and Stare

Name dropping

Reprimand

Voice variety

Ring a bell

Chimes

Hand signal

Standing close to disruptive student

Using a threat

Removing student

Knock it off/Stop moves

Whole group: "Okay folks, let's settle down."

Individual: "Richard, you need to focus on our discussion."

Using a student's name in an example

Calling on a student

Music

Being dramatic

Humor

Questions

Make a student a helper, either for the teacher or another student

There are so many more strategies.

After reading the list of strategies above, I hope you will take an opportunity and list strategies you use. Ask a colleague to come in and check off, or write down, which ones you use during a lesson or period. Then reflect on the data. If you find that you are using more "Knock it off" moves than engaging moves, consider this an opportunity to experiment with new more positive strategies to getting student's attention.

I hope you will share this blogsite with colleagues and friends. If you haven't already, please become a "Follower."

Thanks so much and Best Effort,
Linda103

Posted by **linda103** at 3:59 PM No comments: 

[Recommend this on Google](#)

Wednesday, October 20, 2010

Daily Assignment #14: Facilitating a Parent Conference

Let the conferences begin.

Make sure you do your homework before meeting with parents. If you are going to say something, whether it is academic, or a reference to a social behavior, have evidence. I can't stress enough the importance of providing specific examples for whatever you say. Have assessment scores ready for academic references. When sharing social behaviors, good or bad, have specific examples with dates. Be prepared, but don't do a data dumping meeting.

Begin the conference with, "What is your perception of how the beginning of the year is going for your child?" Instantly, you will find out the direction the conference will be taking. You will also discover if the parents have a realistic perception of the child's academic level and social behaviors.

I'm sure you've already heard this, but I'll say it again, share the positives first and then your concerns. Ask questions, e.g. "Who does your child consider his/her friends?" "What does your child do after school?" "Is there anything that I (teacher) should be aware of?"

To bring closure to the meeting, do a summary of the main points and something that parents can do at home to support their child.

Lastly, take notes. Fill in the details after the parents leave. I discourage taking notes on a computer during the conference. As soon as you put the computer up you have put a barrier between you and the parents. Parents, who have sat through conferences where the teacher took notes on the computer, said they felt the teacher was disconnected and that the clicking was annoying.

If you find that you are not able to cover all the information at this meeting, ask if you can schedule a follow-up meeting.

Relax. Smile. Recognize that this is a partnership. You need the parents to understand and support their child, and you.

I hope you are finding these strategies helpful and will share this blogsite with colleagues and friends.

If you haven't already, please become a "Follower."

Thank you and Best Effort,
Linda103

Posted by **linda103** at **4:53 PM** **2 comments:** 

[Recommend this on Google](#)

Sunday, October 17, 2010

Daily Assignment #13: Scheduling Parent Conferences

You have probably started to think about parent conferences. Scheduling is always a challenge. I recognize that schools may have a set way of conducting conferences. However, I would like to share with you a possible strategy for scheduling.

Send a schedule to parents, listing possible dates and times. Each conference requires about 30 minutes each, to do it well. If you have 25 students you should list about 33-35 possible dates and times. It is also considerate to have at least one late afternoon and a few times before school. These should be scheduled over a period of 2 months.

Have the parents select their 1st, 2nd and 3rd choices. Circle the time that fits into the schedule, sign the original copy and send back home. Keep a master copy for yourself. Most teachers do this part through email. Keep in mind not all families have internet or check it frequently.

In the letter to parents explain the process of scheduling. Also, include what will happen if they miss the conference or need to reschedule. If parents miss the conference, and do not call, call them and say, "It is unfortunate that you missed your conference. I hope everything is okay. The next possible times for a conference are... (give 2-3 possible dates and times). Please let me know which one you will be attending."

Daily Assignment #14 will be strategies for conducting a conference.

Please forward this blogsite to colleagues and friends.

Best Effort,
Linda103

Posted by **linda103** at **6:10 PM** **No comments:** 

[Recommend this on Google](#)

Thursday, October 14, 2010

Daily Assignment #12: Learning Partners

Sorry that this blog is late. Life!

I would like to share with you a strategy for establishing Learning Partners in the classroom.

1. Make a large analog clock on a 8-1/2 by 11 sheet of paper, put the hours (no hands or minute lines). Draw a line extending into the center from each hour. At the top of the page have a space for the students to write their name.
2. Have a quick, snappy piece of music to play during this activity.
3. Hand out the sheets of paper and have them write their name at the top. Do not explain the purpose, otherwise they will only get friends to sign their clock.
4. Explain that once the music starts, they are to get up and exchange papers with 12 other people. Example, I would give my clock to Tim and he would put his name at 1:00 and I would put my name at 1:00 on his clock. Then I would find someone else and have them sign another hour and I would need to sign the same hour on their clock. If they already have someone for that hour I would need to skip them and go to someone else. I highly recommend that you model this for your students. If the directions are not clear you will end up with a huge mess. I sure hope what I've written is clear for you.
5. After a few students have finished, stop the music and have everyone sit down.
6. You will need to go over the clock and ask who does not have a partner for each hour. This is very time consuming, but the benefits are worth it. You then start pairing up the remaining students. If you have an extra student they become the substitute or you can create triads. Example: Teacher, "Who does not have a 2:00 partner?" Three students raise their hands. "Okay, Jane you put Regina down for 2:00 and Regina you put down Jane for 2:00." "Linda you will be our substitute or join a pair when we use this strategy."
7. Collect the papers and then explain to the students what the purpose of the clocks will be.
8. Make copies for yourself. (Older students have a tendency to change them or lose them.) Have them keep a copy in their notebook or someplace they can refer to them quickly. If you are a self-contained classroom, post them for quick reference.

Helpful Hints:

- * When you use Learning Partners, always give the directions for the activity before you assign the Learning Partner. If you say which Learning Partner it is first, the students will focus on that person and not the directions for the activity.
- * Whenever you want to pair students together you should say, "Make eye contact with your 3:00 partner. Go to them. That is who you will be working with today." Making eye contact first helps them to go to that person. Otherwise, they may not

get there.

* Make a note to yourself that you used the 3:00 partner so you won't use it the next time. You'll never remember on your own, trust me. It will also eliminate the students complaining about always having to work with the same person.

* You do not have to use a clock pattern for setting up partners. You can use content related designs. For example, I used geometric shapes--rhombus, trapezoid and hexagon. I would say, " make eye contact with your rhombus partner." In this way, I was teaching the shapes, as well as pairing students. Some teachers have used U.S. states--"make eye contact with your Florida partner." Another one might be continents, or parts of a plant, water cycle, famous artist or musicians. The list is endless.

I hope you find this helpful. If you have any questions about this strategy, or any of the previous ones, just ask.
Please share this blogsite with colleagues. The more the better.

Best Effort,
Linda103

Posted by [linda103](#) at 5:22 AM 1 comment: 

[Recommend this on Google](#)

Sunday, October 10, 2010

Daily Assignment #11: Class Newsletter

If you are reading this, welcome back. I appreciate your interest and support.

Let's begin-----

A great way to communicate with parents on a weekly basis, and to have students reflect on major events each week, is to establish a weekly class newsletter. You're probably asking, "How on earth do I fit this into an already busy day?" Believe it or not, it can be very easy.

First, ask for parent volunteers. It doesn't have to be the same parent each week, but it does need to be on a consistent day and time. I've had one parent take on this responsibility for the whole year. I've also had 2, and some years 4 parents, share this responsibility. When it's more than one parent, have them work out the weekly schedule among themselves.

Second, rotating through a class list, select 4 students a week to become reporters. Generating topics with the whole group helps to refresh everyone's memory. With the parent, the students select one topic each to write about. I restricted the topics to events within our class. That is to say, it couldn't be about events in their personal life or at recess or during specialist times. I also had the parent work with the students outside the classroom, e.g. hallway, cafeteria, library.

Third, you, the classroom teacher, should write a message to the parents. It should include upcoming events, important information, e.g. thank you to all the reporters

and the parent, progress within units of study, etc...

Fourth, the parent puts the newsletter together and makes all the copies. Remember to provide the parents with a model of what the final newsletter should look like.

You did it! And, you have created a strategy to involve parents in a non-threatening way.

If you like this strategy and all the others, I hope you will share this blogsite with other colleagues and become a follower.

On Wednesday I will share a strategy for establishing Learning Partners.

Thank you for your support.

Best Effort,

Linda103

Posted by [linda103](#) at 6:01 PM No comments: 

[Recommend this on Google](#)

Wednesday, September 22, 2010

Daily Assignment #10: Birthday Celebrations

Handling students' birthdays can be a challenge. Parents' plans for their child's celebration in the classroom can be very different from what you are willing to handle. Invitations, alone can be a major problem. So, let me offer a strategy.

First, make it clear to parents that no invitations can be passed out in the classroom, or outside the classroom door. I understand the reasoning for parents doing this--not having mailing addresses or emails, mostly for convenience.

However, it can create chaos in the classroom. If one child is not included the teacher must deal with the hurt feelings for the entire day. If a child loses their invitation, again, the classroom teacher must deal with the problem.

Second, let the parents know that all children will be treated the same for their birthdays. Parents may send in finger type snacks, e.g. munchkins, cookies, cupcakes, to be shared at snack time or sometime during the day, at which time the class will sing "Happy Birthday" to the child. Make it clear to parents that cakes, ice cream, drinks and party favors and, yes, even birthday parties, are unmanageable. They are time consuming, messy and can make other students feel uncomfortable about what their families can provide. It is also unnecessary for parents to be present during this time.

Notify all parents well in advance of the first celebration.

On another note, for the next few weeks, I will be without internet access, maybe.

If possible, I will continue my blog, but it may not be possible. Please continue to check and know, I will definitely be back on October 10th.

Best Effort,
Linda103

Posted by [linda103](#) at 3:13 AM No comments: 

[Recommend this on Google](#)

Sunday, September 19, 2010

Daily Assignment #9: Open House

Aaaahh, Open House. In the past, I would fear Open House. I could easily stand in front of a room full of children and be comfortable, but put me in front of a room full of adults and I would have butterflies, my face would turn red, and so on. It wasn't pretty.

Parents have come to Open House to know about their child's day, what to do for birthdays, how to drop their child off in the morning and pick him/her up at the end of the day, what will parent-teacher communication look like, and the all important, homework schedule. Having said that, please know, they also want to see you.

Here is a format I used to avoid folks seeing my nervousness, which became a mainstay of my Open House presentations. A few days before the Open House take photos of the classroom, of the students during meeting time, reading, math, science, social studies, snack time, recess, etc... Include each child in at least one photo. (Parents will notice if their child is not in a photo.) Make a slideshow or a powerpoint presentation of the photos. For each slide describe what is happening. Make notecards for yourself, so that you are sure to hit all the important information.

Leave about 15 minutes, at the end, for questions and comments. If you feel challenged by a question or comment, feel free to say, "I need to think about that and get back to you." Always think positive intentions.

Providing refreshments helps to make parents feel welcome.

Don't forget to breathe and smile!

Daily Assignment #10 will be on how to handle birthday celebrations

Best Effort,
Linda103

Posted by [linda103](#) at 4:24 PM 1 comment: 

Wednesday, September 15, 2010

Daily Assignment #8: Lessons 3&4 for Establishing Classroom Rules

For Lesson 3, you will need a large floor plan of the school playground and cafeteria. As a whole group, have the students design rules for each floor plan (try to combine some), e.g. no throwing food in the cafeteria, only go down the slide, no hitting. With each suggestion have a quick discussion, "If this was done would it be respectful or disrespectful? What would disrespectful/respectful behavior look like?" An example might be: Rule: Only go down the slide. "Is that being disrespectful or respectful?" "Respectful." "Who are you respecting?" "Friends." "What would disrespectful behavior look like?" "Going up the slide." "Who are you disrespecting?" "Friends."

Point out that different behaviors are necessary for different spaces. But there is one behavior that seems to be very important. "What is that behavior?" As Aretha Franklin would say, R-E-S-P-E-C-T!

Lesson 4 pulls it all together. You will need a large floor plan of the classroom. As a whole group, have the students design rules for the class. Process with the group and see if any of them can be combined. Have the same discussion for each rule, as you did in Lesson 3.

Hopefully, they will recognize the importance of always being respectful and that that is the key to all appropriate behavior. Students may want to keep all the rules up. Make sure the word RESPECT is on the chart in large letters.

Post all the charts so that the students can see their progression through this process.

Remember, you are the model of the behaviors you want your students to demonstrate (so, don't go up the slide). And, they are watching. They are watching to see how you speak to colleagues, as well as to them. Also, remember to watch your body language.

More on body language another time.

This unit, and the books that go with it, can be used at almost every grade level.

The older students will enjoy revisiting picture books or old favorites and the younger grades always love a story. So, please don't hesitate to experiment with this unit.

Daily Assignment #9 will be on the all important --- OPEN HOUSE! It's coming up.

Best Effort,
Linda103

Posted by [linda103](#) at 4:00 PM No comments: 

[Recommend this on Google](#)

Sunday, September 12, 2010

Daily Assignment #7:A Unit for Establishing Rules for the Classroom

There are many ways to develop rules for a classroom. Some teachers have a set list of rules. Some teachers follow the guidelines of Responsive Classroom in establishing rules.

I chose to work with the students on developing "The Rule." That's right, one rule. I know that is shocking, but it only takes one rule. And it is "RESPECT EACH OTHER!"

I would like to share with you a unit that I designed for establishing "The Rule." This unit has 4 lessons but may take 4-6 days to complete.

Select 3 books which reflect some form of chaos in an environment. I chose The Mystery of the Red Mitten, by Steven Kellogg; Noah's Ark, by Peter Spier and Old MacDonald Had An Apartment House, by Judith Barrett.

Divide the class into 3 groups. Depending on the grade level, have the students, or an adult, read one of the stories to a group. Each group should have a large sheet of paper with an outline of the environment depicted in the story they are reading, e.g. red mitten, ark, apartment house.

Before the stories are read, ask the students to think about "What might one rule have been, for the characters in the story, to prevent all the chaos?"

Establish roles within the group, e.g. summarizer of the story, rule presenter/s, recorder/s, timekeeper. Some jobs may have more than one student.

After the groups have read their story, they are to write down all the rules they thought about onto the large paper, (establish a minimum and maximum amount of rules because it can get out of control, or you might end up with nothing). Depending on the age group, someone will need to be the recorder. This part of the lesson may take 20-30 minutes. Setting a timer will help to move the conversation along and keep the groups focused, hence a timekeeper.

While students are waiting for groups to finish, the other groups may draw details on their large paper, e.g. staircase, animals, etc...

When all groups have completed listing their rules, bring the class back together and have each group do a presentation. Begin with story summarizer, then presenter/s of rules. Process the 3 groups' work and list the common rules, while also pointing out that each environment had different rules as well. Use the word "respect" while processing. Post charts.

This lesson may take 2 days, depending on the age/grade of students.

For homework, have the students list rules for their home. On the following day, process the homework with the students. What are the common rules? Which rules are family specific? Again, use the word "respect". You might also put them back into their groups and have them come up with the answers to the 2 questions. Then process as a whole group. Post the homework.

On Wednesday, I will explain the next 2 lessons in this unit.
I hope you will let me know how this goes.

Best Effort,
Linda103

Posted by linda103 at 5:47 PM No comments: 

[Recommend this on Google](#)

Wednesday, September 8, 2010

Daily Assignment #6 : Notices/Homework

If you are reading this, Congratulations, you have made it through the first day of school and you still want to teach!!!!

I would like to share with you an organizational strategy for sending School Notices and homework home.

The custodian, at my school, would always say he knew more about my classroom than parents because he always found the notices and homework on the floor.

So, clearly I needed a new strategy for notices and homework assignments going home and coming back.

Have a pocket folder for each student, labeled with their name in one corner and Homework written on the center of the folder. On the pockets, on one side write "home" and on the other write "school." Any notices/homework assignments that were to go home, you guessed it, went on the home side and, I think you can figure out the rest. Have a basket large enough to hold all folders near the door of the classroom, along with a class list. As students come in the next day, have them put their folders in the basket and check their names off the list. Simple, and yet, basic skills are being taught, e.g. organization, responsibility, to mention a few.

The first day you try this, there are several steps you will need to do. First, write a letter to parents letting them know about this strategy/routine. Then you must teach your students how to do the routine.

Remember: 1. Name it.

2. State it's purpose.

3. Model how it will look-- what the folder will look like; how they should take the papers out when they get home; how it will look when they complete their homework; making sure their name is on the papers; how to put papers back in the folder neatly; how to put the folder in the basket when they return to school and how to check their name off the list.

4. Have the students practice with a partner.

5. Give feedback

6. Practice

Now send it home. Are you exhausted yet?

I know some of you are saying that this is way too elementary. Trust me, it isn't. Kids may role their eyes and giggle, but they will remember.

Okay, on the next day, everybody gets it right! YEA!! You are awesome, which is probably what you're thinking, but in order to keep this routine successful, you must be tenacious about the steps.

Let's say it doesn't work the next day, what do you do. Re-teach. Sometimes it takes many reteaching lessons, but if it is important to you, you need to be tenacious.

If you're not, the students perceive that you don't care. This is not a good precedent to set.

So, give it a lot of thought. Figure out if this is a strategy that is important to you and would make your life a little easier if you put in the effort now.

Let me know how it goes.

Best Effort,
Linda103

Posted by [linda103](#) at 8:01 PM No comments: 

[Recommend this on Google](#)

Sunday, September 5, 2010

Daily Assignment #5- Introducing a Descriptive Graphic Organizer

In the last post, I described the Artifact Bag (a.k.a. All About Me Bag) and how to implement it. Tonight's assignment is how to take it up a notch by adding a visual tool to represent a higher level thinking skill--Recognizing Attributes or, it could also be, Identifying Characteristics and Deductive Thinking.

That was a mouth full.

Before you present this activity to your students make sure you :

1. tell them you will be using a descriptive organizer
2. describe it's purpose
3. show them how it will be used

For each student you should prepare an 8 1/2 x 11 heavy piece of paper by drawing a circle in the center about 3 inches in diameter, then draw 4 lines coming out from the circumference line. At the end of each line draw a small rectangle. As you share an Artifact Bag, (a.k.a. All About Me Bag), write on the rectangle what the object is and on the lines write the students' guesses as to what that object tells them about the person. If the students guess who the person is, write their name in the center circle. If they don't guess correctly, put the objects back in the bag and put the graphic organizer aside for another time. Also, somewhere on the paper add their photos once they have been guessed.

You have just introduced the Descriptive Graphic Organizer, and modeled it for the class, 20-30 times. Probably, depending on the age group, the students maybe able to do this activity, as the teacher, after 10-15 times with the teacher modeling the steps.

Think of all the wonderful skills you have introduced by doing this activity, e.g.

community building, higher level thinking skills, and possibly leadership roles.

Now, you have a great beginning of the year bulletinboard. As students are guessed, put their self- portraits (see Daily Assignment #3), descriptive graphic organizer and photo together on display. Everyone loves to see the comparison of the self portrait and photo, plus they get to learn a little something about your students/class.

Please let me know how your first week is going. Questions are welcome.

Best Effort,
linda103

Posted by **linda103** at 3:48 PM No comments: 

[Recommend this on Google](#)

Wednesday, September 1, 2010

Daily Assignment #4 Community Building Activity "Artifact Bags"

I would like to share with you a community building activity. This makes a great 1st homework assignment. The name of this activity is "Artifact Bags" or "About Me Bags." I have used this strategy with first and second graders, as well as adults.

Each student will need a brown paper lunch bag. They are to place 4 objects inside which represent themselves. For example, I would put a small book to represent my love for reading, a tiny fake apple for teaching, a piece of chocolate for my love of chocolate and small set of knitting needles for, you guessed it, knitting. Have them put a photo of themselves in the bag as well. No names.

Collect all the bags in a large decorated box. Throughout the first 2 weeks of school you will share these bags with the whole class and they will guess who the person is, based on the contents. If the class guesses correctly then you take the photo out. If they don't guess correctly, you put everything back into the bag and you do that one again another time.

You have to prep the students before you begin because they get very excited when there bag is being shared and give away who it belongs to. So, you need to talk to them about body language and not calling out what the objects represent.

This is a great strategy for students to discover what they have in common with each other. It helps everyone to learn something they may not know about their friend.

Don't forget to include a bag for yourself.

My next blog will be how to take this up a notch with a graphic organizer.
Best Effort,
Linda

Posted by **linda103** at 5:26 PM No comments: 

Sunday, August 29, 2010

Daily Assignment#3-Plans for the 1st day

Some of you have already started school and some will begin this week or next week. For those of you who have already started, I apologize for the lateness of this blog. However, I hope you still find it thought provoking.

In planning the first day there are several things to keep in mind. First, consider where specialist, lunch and other events, which will impact your schedule, occur. Then begin planning around them. Be prepared. Have everything xerox, collated, cut-out, stapled, whatever is needed. You will be much more relaxed with these things done. You will also be ready to focus on the students and parents as they come in.

Beginning with a community building activity on the first day is essential. Having a class meeting brings everyone together, and helps to get the parents out of the room. Have the students sit in a circle, say their name and share something about one special person they had an opportunity to spend time with over the summer. This stem equalizes the conversation. Make sure you share as well.

Post the schedule for the day, and read it to them, so the students know what will be happening and that there will be an end to the school day. I wouldn't put the times next to the activities because those first few days never play-out the way you want. Some students will challenge you if you are late/early for the next activity.

After sharing they will need a get up and move activity. They could do a writing activity at their new seats. This can take many forms depending on the grade level. In the lower grades you may need to teach how to write a letter of the alphabet. Start with a straight line letter, such as l or t. For older students, have them write a story. It might be about what they shared about the special person.

They probably need some type of break by now. You could introduce a routine, at this point. It might be how to get in a line. Remember, any routine you introduce needs to be taught. Don't assume they know how to do it. Tell them what they will be doing, the purpose, model it, let them practice it, give them feedback, practice again and do it frequently.

Take them for a walk around the building. Even though they may have been in this building for several years, it is still a new year, with a new teacher. Never assume!

If you can, now might be a good time to let them go outside to play. You probably need fresh air also.

You should include silent reading, which would be best after a lot of movement activity, such as recess.

This would also be an opportunity to listen to students' read. Again, this is a form of assessment.

Also, find a moment for you to read to the students. It might be a picture book or a short story that relates to the beginning of school or the first unit of study you will

be teaching. Again, match it to the grade level.

As students finish, you could have an art activity setup for them to draw a self-portrait. You will need to first explain the activity, have a model of how it should look, full page or half page, details, background. If you do this it eliminates the game of "guess what's on the teacher's mind."

Another activity, I swear by this one for lots of reasons, "scrolls" or as some students mistakenly call them "squirrels." Prepare for each child a cardboard, paper towel roll. Tape a sheet of 1" graph paper to it. In each box, on the top row, write the numbers -9 to 0. On the second row, write the numbers 1-6, the students will complete this row and continue on to the next. On the inside of the roll, write the student's name. This is essential. It will save a lot of aggravation when someone can't find their scroll or mixes it up with someone else's. As students finish one page you add another page. They just keep writing numbers at their own pace. I have students do this all year long. It is a content related filler as well. The highest number a student got to, within 2 years, was 13.678. Again, this becomes an assessment tool. You quickly find out who can count, write numbers correctly, who does reversals and transposing of numbers. Also, you will discover who understands place value, can recognize patterns and likes or doesn't like challenges.

Don't try to do all your assessments on the first day. I found observation was the most informative the first 2 days. Having the students share in the morning can tell you a lot about their comfort levels and oral communication. The writing activity informs you as to their handwriting ability or their story writing ability. The scrolls are full of assessment information.

Are you exhausted yet? It's probably 1:00. It shouldn't be 9:00! Or we're in trouble.

Now you need an afternoon activity. How about letting them experiment with math manipulatives. They will have fun and you will be observing and noting their behaviors. I would only pull out 2-3 types. Remember to explain how to use them and how to clean-up when they are done.

At the end of the day introduce a clean-up routine. State what the routine is, the purpose, model it, let them practice, give feedback and practice again.

Any routine you teach you need to be tenacious about it, if it is important to you. More about this later.

Most importantly, over plan! Better to have extra than not enough. Trust me on this one.

Make sure you laugh. This has got to be the funniest job ever.

Now, if you have made it through the day, you are to go home, have a glass of wine, a chocolate dessert and to bed early because it all begins again tomorrow.

I've decided to post my blog on Wednesdays also. So, now I will have new blogs twice a week. Yea!!! I hope.

Please let me know how things are going or if you have questions.

Have a great week.

Best Effort,

Linda

Posted by [linda103](#) at 5:38 PM 2 comments: 

[Recommend this on Google](#)

Sunday, August 22, 2010

Daily Assignment#2- Creating a classroom environment

As promised, it is Sunday and I am posting the 2nd blog. At this point, the setup of the classroom needs to be designed. You need to think about the needs of your incoming students and how you plan to teach. Do you want a teacher centered environment or a student centered environment? Should there be learning centers, table groupings, or horseshoe arrangement of desk? Where should the teacher's desk be placed? Should there be a place to have community meetings? How will students move about the room?

There is a lot to think about. For me, an important piece was to make sure that no matter where I was standing in the room I could see everyone.

In regard to the teacher's desk, I did not have one. I hooked a shoebag over a closet door for my supplies and used a counter, on something similar to a bookcase, for my desktop. Not having a large teacher's desk provided more space and flexibility in my classroom arrangement. I liked having an arrangement with flexibility. I could move furniture easily for plays, movies, class breakfasts, presentations, etc... I also used large tables instead of desks for my students. However, I did have a few desks. The students had storage bins for their supplies. They also had these great "seat jackets" with pockets to hold immediate materials/supplies. They kept pencils, erasers, scissors, folders, etc..., in the pockets. These seat jackets eliminated the need for the students to get up and find the materials and roam the room, which usually led to some other behaviors such as never coming back.

The design of the classroom is an integral part of classroom management. Students must be able to see the teacher and any visuals that are being used. No student should have their back to a teacher.

The design of the classroom also sends a message to the students as to what is important to the teacher. Does the teacher want students to work independently or collaboratively? Is community important? This brings me right back to, do you want a teacher centered or child centered environment?

If you have any questions about your classroom setup please do not hesitate to ask.

Next, plans for the 1st day.

Best Effort,
Linda103

Posted by [linda103](#) at 3:51 PM 2 comments: 

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Wednesday, August 18, 2010

Daily Assignment

Well, it's that time of year. Where to begin? What do I need to begin? How do I setup my classroom? Where should I put the teacher's/students' desk? How do I create a learning environment? How do I greet the students/parents on the first day? How should I handle a child crying on the first day? How do I get the parents out of the classroom on the first day so I can begin? What do I say at a parent conference? So many questions. HELP!!!

I would like to help you. I would like to share, with you, my 34 years of teaching experience. I have taught grades 1, 2, 3, 5, and 6. I have also been an educational consultant for 18 years. I taught a graduate course on effective teaching to K-12 teachers. I retired in June 2010 and would now like to share my knowledge and skills with you.

If you have a question or a concern about teaching, I can help. So, I hope you will take advantage of my knowledge and experience.

On Sundays I will post a new strategy, structure, routine or problem/solution that you can experiment with throughout the week.

For example: What is the first thing I should do before the first day of school?

Get a class list with the students' addresses, parent contact information and birthdates (to be used later). Write a welcome letter to your students. Let the students know how excited you are about the school year and being their teacher. Include something that they should look for on the first day when they come in, e.g. something special/new in the classroom. Also, include a letter to the parents describing a typical school day(schedule), supplies their child will need for the first day, your contact info, a routine, e.g. snacks, birthday celebrations, dropoff and pickup procedures and how much you are looking forward to working with them to support their child's learning.

I hope you will let me know how the strategies you experiment with from this blog are going. I want to help you build your repertoire for teaching.

Best Effort,
Linda103

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Daily Assignment

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